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ABSTRACT

To determine how selected community colleges with institutional research offices have organized the office to implement institutional research, incorporated the office into the institutional structure, assigned responsibility for institutional research, determined priorities for research projects, and assessed the value of outcomes of research projects, eight community colleges were visited. Data were gathered by use of a questionnaire and guideline questions, as well as by supplementary information and materials furnished by the interviewees. Interviews were held with the person responsible for research in each college, as well as with other people in the colleges. Analysis of the data showed that: (1) the institutional research office of each college was organized as an administrative unit; (2) the person responsible for research is at the director or coordinator level in the administrative structure; (3) the research office usually employs at least one professional person and one secretarial or clerical person, and there is a tendency to employ one or more technical or paraprofessional persons; (4) decisions to institute a research unit are made unilaterally at the presidential or president's cabinet level; (5) research project priorities are generally decided at the administrative level; (6) evaluation of the research project output has not been formalized; (7) research directors felt that too much research time was being diverted to nonresearch projects; (8) there was need for research designed to assist in the development of new instruction methods and to assess the outcomes of instructional methodology; and (9) the release of data to the public through one office enhanced the image of the college with the public. (DB)

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INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH OFFICE DEVELOPMENT IN EIGHT COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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JC 740 331

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH OFFICE DEVELOPMENT IN EIGHT COMMUNITY COLLEGES

The major focus of this project was to determine how selected community colleges, each having an institutional research office, have:

1. organized the office to implement institutional research.
2. incorporated the office into the institutional structure.
3. assigned responsibility for institutional research.
4. determined priorities for research projects.
5. assessed the value of outcomes of research projects.

Arrangements were made to visit eight selected community colleges having offices of institutional research. Three colleges are in Michigan, three in Illinois, and two in Ohio. One day was spent at each college, where personal interviews were held with the people assigned the responsibility for institutional research and with other responsible people including primary users of research projects.

Three instruments were used in gathering basic data about each institution. (See exhibits A, B and C.) The basic data were supplemented by information obtained during the interviews and various printed material offered to the interviewer.

No predetermined procedure or time schedule was established prior to the visitations. The interviewer relied on the person responsible for research to set the pace during the interview and to arrange for other interviews with appropriate people.

Two types of interviews were used. A primary interview was held

with the person responsible for research. Secondary interviews were held with other people in the colleges. The primary interview was used to:

1. establish a relationship with the research director.
2. obtain answers to the questionnaire (Exhibit A) and Guideline Form A (Exhibit B).
3. gather additional data not covered by the questionnaire and Guideline Form A.
4. arrange for secondary interviews with primary users of research projects.

The secondary interviews were used to try to gather data from primary users of the results of research projects. In addition to obtaining answers to questions listed on Guideline Form B (Exhibit C), the interviewer attempted to obtain opinions regarding institutional research at the respective institutions.

The questionnaire contained ten basic questions regarding the office of institutional research, the size of the institution, and research projects. Responses to the first nine questions are listed below:

		#1 - TITLE OF PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH
College of Du Page	- Illinois	Director of Institutional Research
Delta	- Michigan	Director of Research & Development
Wm. Rainey Harper	- Illinois	Director of Planning & Research
Lakeland	- Ohio	Research Coordinator
Lansing	- Michigan	Director, Grants & Institutional Research
Lorain County	- Ohio	Director of Institutional Planning & Research
Macomb	- Michigan	Coordinator of Instructional Research
Moraine Valley	- Illinois	Director of Institutional Planning & Research

	#2 - NAME OF OFFICE RESPONSIBLE FOR RESEARCH	#3 - TITLE OF IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR
College of Du Page	Institutional Research	Director of Planning & Information
Delta	Research & Development	President
Wm. Rainey Harper	Planning & Research	President
Lakeland	Research Services	Dean of Administration
Lansing	Grants & Institutional Research	Vice President
Lorain County	Institutional Planning & Research	President
Macomb	Research & Development	Admin. Asst. to President
Moraine Valley	Institutional Research	Executive Vice President

#4 - SIZE OF INSTITUTION

	STUDENT HEADCOUNT FALL 1973	FULL TIME EQUATED STUDENTS - FALL 1973	GENERAL OPERATING BUDGET FISCAL 1973-74
College of Du Page	9,996	6,217	$9,348,600
Delta	8,800	4,123	9,308,400
Wm. Rainey Harper	12,747	5,811	8,000,000
Lakeland	5,105	2,917	4,500,000
Lansing	10,640	5,569	9,328,000
Lorain County	4,319	2,808	4,659,000
Macomb	19,217	9,735	14,544,000
Moraine Valley	6,000	4,000	5,600,000

#5 - CLASSIFICATIONS OF PEOPLE WORKING DIRECTLY IN INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH (In ½ full-time equated positions)

	PROFESSIONAL	TECHNICAL OR PARA-PROFESSIONAL	SECRETARIAL CLERICAL	STUDENT AIDES	TOTAL
College of Du Page	1 3/4	1	2	1/4	5
Delta	2		1 1/2		3 1/2
Wm. Rainey Harper	1		3		4
Lakeland	1	1		1/2	2 1/2
Lansing	1		1		2
Lorain County	1		1		2
Macomb	2	1	1		4
Moraine Valley	2	1	2		5

	#6 - IS INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH STAFF ADEQUATE TO ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES?
College of Du Page	Yes
Delta	No
Wm. Rainey Harper	Yes
Lakeland	Yes
Lansing	No
Lorain County	No
Macomb	No
Moraine Valley	Yes

	#7 - INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH BUDGET FOR 1973-74	#8 - IS INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH BUDGET ADEQUATE TO ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES?
College of Du Page	$87,000	Yes
Delta	60,000	No
Wm. Rainey Harper	51,800	Yes
Lakeland	30,000	Yes
Lansing	33,000	No
Lorain County	29,600	No
Macomb	80,000	Yes
Moraine Valley	56,000	Yes

	#9 - PERCENT OF RESEARCH OFFICE TIME DEVOTED TO RESEARCH PROJECTS
College of Du Page	25
Delta	50
Wm. Rainey Harper	100
Lakeland	50
Lansing	30
Lorain County	75
Macomb	50
Moraine Valley	50

Response to question number ten indicated numerous project priorities. The six most often listed, however, are summarized below.

	Frequency
Student follow-up studies	8
Management information systems	6
Instructional program evaluations	5
Manpower needs for enrollment projections	6
Program feasibility studies	7
Community attitude toward college	7

During each primary interview an attempt was made to obtain responses to questions listed on Exhibit B.

The first question was designed to determine the equality between the number of liberal arts and vocational programs offered at each college. However, due to differences in program classification methods, the responses to the question were not considered to be useful for the

purposes of the study.

Responses to questions two and three are summarized below.

	#2 - YEAR THE RESEARCH OFFICE WAS ESTABLISHED	#3 - YEAR THE COLLEGE WAS ESTABLISHED
College of Du Page	1970	1967
Delta	1964	1961
Wm. Rainey Harper	1969	1965
Lakeland	1972	1967
Lansing	1970	1957
Lorain County	1963	1963
Macomb	1966	1962
Moraine Valley	1968	1965

The responses to question four revealed that in six of the eight colleges an office of institutional research was established in response to a recognized institutional need.

Responses to question five indicated that the procedure for selecting the person responsible for research was not definitely known to the majority of respondents.

Question six may be summarized as follows. Of the eight people currently responsible for research, three were previously employed in other positions at their respective colleges. One had been a part-time instructor, one a dean of sciences, and one a dean of special projects and college services.

Questions seven and eight were used to determine whether a committee was used to decide the type of research projects that would be undertaken and, if not, who made such decisions. Of the eight responses, only one indicated that a committee was used, and it was used on a selective basis. In all cases the director of research or other administrators had the

greatest influence on decision making regarding research projects.

Question nine asked whether any method of assessing outputs of research efforts was used. Only one person reported that a formal assessment method had been developed. All respondents indicated, however, that opportunity for informal assessment was readily available to users of research data.

Responses to question ten indicated that administrative offices were the primary users of the results of research projects. However, a great deal of concern was expressed regarding the fact that little use of the research office was being made by instructional departments.

Secondary interviews were used to attempt to gather information from primary users of the results of research projects. A third instrument was used to assist in gathering pertinent data. (Exhibit C).

The first two questions were used to elicit the name of the person being interviewed and his position at the college. Thirty-two secondary interviews were held. As noted earlier, most of the users of research services were administrators. Although the names of their offices differed, the following summary indicates the types of activity for which the respondents were primarily responsible.

President	2
Dean of Instruction	6
Dean of Administration	4
Dean of Student Personnel	3
Data Processing	3
Admissions	5
Financial Aid and Placement	2
Learning Resources	1
Public Relations	1
Instructors	5
TOTAL	32

Of the thirty-two people interviewed, only two indicated that they were not particularly satisfied with the results of research projects. When each person was asked whether he had opportunities to suggest research projects, all responded that they had had numerous opportunities to do so.

When asked whether there were opportunities to assess the output of the institutional research unit, each respondent indicated that assessment was on an informal basis and that opportunities were available for assessment on that basis.

Only two respondents indicated that their operating units were experiencing problems with the research unit. In both cases the problems were a result of the research unit not being able to adhere to original time schedules.

When asked how the research unit could better serve the needs of other operating units, the respondents indicated a need for more data. The areas most often mentioned were identical to the six project priorities indicated by the research directors.

The conclusions that may be drawn from the preceding data and other information obtained during the visitations that relate to the major focus of this project are presented below.

1. The institutional research office in the community colleges visited is organized as an administrative unit.
2. The person responsible for research is at the director or coordinator level in the administrative structure. He typically

reports to the college president or other high-level administrator.

3. The research office usually employs at least one professional person and at least one secretarial or clerical person. There is also a tendency to employ one or more technical or para-professional persons.

4. The assignment of responsibility for institutional research has been in response to administrative data needs. The method of professional personnel selection, however, is not definitely known. Indications are that determinations to institute a research unit are made unilaterally at the presidential or president's cabinet level.

5. The determination of research project priorities is generally made at the administrative level, either by the director or the research unit or a higher level of authority. Committees are not used to any significant extent to determine project priorities. Most projects are undertaken to provide data deemed important to administrative offices.

6. Assessment of the value of research project output has not been formalized to any significant extent, although there seems to be a great deal of opportunity for informal assessment. However, when one considers the fact that most research projects are developed in response to administrative needs, one could expect a significant amount of on-going informal assessment throughout the term of each project. It may therefore be redundant to institute any formal assessment procedure for use at the conclusion of a project.

Two major concerns were repeatedly stressed during both the primary and secondary interviews. The people responsible for research indicated that too much research office time was being diverted, by administrative decision, to non-research kinds of projects, such as, state, federal and private grant applications, institutional self-studies, various kinds of institutional facilities development projects, and special studies in response to state and federal agency requests. Second, the majority of primary and secondary respondents expressed concern about the lack of instructional research, that is, research designed to assist in the development of new instruction methods and assess the outcomes of new and existing instructional methology. Expressions regarding the concern apparently were not meant to lessen emphasis on the kinds of descriptive studies being conducted by research offices.

A final point that should be made is that most respondents were of the opinion that the responsibility for the release of data to the public through one office, namely the research office, enhanced the image of the college with the public. The point was repeatedly made that prior to centralization of the research responsibility there were too many instances in which dissimilar answers to the same question were released to the public, resulting in public confusion and embarrassment for the college community.

EXHIBIT A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Listed below are a few questions that should give us a reference point for discussing your institutional research unit. I will appreciate your answering the questions at your earliest convenience and holding the questionnaire until I arrive on your campus.

1. What is the title of the person responsible for institutional research at your college? _____

2. What is the name of the office responsible for institutional research?

   _____

3. What is the title of the immediate supervisor? _____

4. What is the size of your institution in these terms?
   A. Student Headcount _____ (Fall 1973)
   B. Full Time Equated Students _____ (Fall 1973)
   C. General Operating Budget _____ (1973-74 Fiscal Year)

5. How many people in the following classifications are working directly on institutional research projects? (Please indicate in 1/4 units the full-time equated positions.)
   A. Professional _____
   B. Technical or para-professional _____
   C. Secretarial-Clerical _____
   D. Students _____

6. Do you consider your staff adequate to achieve your objectives? YES _____ NO _____

7. What is the amount of the institutional research budget for 1973-74? _____

8. Do you consider your budget adequate to achieve your objectives? YES _____ NO _____

9. What is your best estimate of the percentage of time your institutional research unit devotes to projects you consider to be directly related to research?

   _____

10. What institutional research projects are currently being given a high priority by you and your staff?

    _____ _____

    _____ _____

    _____ _____

    _____ _____

It will be helpful if you attach (1) a copy of the outline of the basic organizational structure of your institution with an indication of the relative position of the institutional research unit and (2) a copy of your job description or a list of duties and responsibilities.

Thank you for your time and your interest in my project.

Robert J. Chick

EXHIBIT B

GUIDELINE QUESTIONS FOR INSTITUTIONAL VISITATION

A. Questions to person responsible for institutional research

1. How many programs do you have in Liberal Arts? _____
   Vocational-Technical, Business and Commerce, and Health? _____

2. When was the research function initiated at your college? _____

3. When was the College established? _____

4. What was the primary reason for establishing a research unit at your college?

_____

_____

5. How was the person responsible for research selected? _____

_____

_____

6. Was the director employed at the college in another position prior to being appointed research director? YES _____ NO _____

   If YES, what was his previous title? _____

7. Do you use a committee to determine the research projects your unit will undertake?
   YES _____ NO _____

   If YES, who is included on the committee? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. If you do not use the committee structure, who decides what projects will be undertaken? _____

_____

EXHIBIT C

B. Questions to users of completed research projects

1. Name of organizational unit? _____

2. Name and position of person responding to questions? _____

_____

3. Have you generally been satisfied with results of institutional research projects that impact your area of responsibility?

YES _____ NO _____

4. Do you have an opportunity to suggest research projects to the institutional research unit?

YES _____ NO _____

If NO, would you like to have the opportunity? YES _____ NO _____

5. Do you have an opportunity to assess the output of the institutional research unit?

YES _____ NO _____

If NO, do you believe you should have the opportunity? YES _____ NO _____

6. In your opinion, is your operating unit experiencing any major problems with the research unit?

YES _____ NO _____

If YES, please list the major problem areas as you perceive them.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. How could the institutional research unit better serve your operating unit?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. Do you use any method of assessing the outputs of your research efforts?

YES _____ NO _____

If yes, basically how are they assessed? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. What organizational units use the results of institutional research projects?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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OCT 11 1974

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